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ABSTRACT

Six Samoan children ranging in age from 2 to 16 were the subjects of a study to document the spontaneous production of the deictic verbs "sau" ("to come") and "aumai" ("to bring/give"). "Aumai" appears to be used before "sau" and is generally used more frequently than "sau." Imperatives with "aumai" tend to be directed to higher status persons or to peers. These results reflect the fact that the young child is supported and encouraged to make demands for objects, and also instructed to share objects with younger siblings. The order of acquisition and frequency further reflects the fact that within the household, higher status persons generally issue directives of this type to lower status persons. The effectiveness of these sociocultural constraints is evident in the fact that a semantic feature analysis predicts the reverse order of acquisition and frequency. (JB)

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THE ACQUISITION OF 'COME', 'GIVE' AND 'BRING' BY SAMOAN CHILDREN

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The purpose of this paper is to document the spontaneous production by Samoan children of the deictic verbs sau 'to come' and aumai 'to bring/give' (literally: au 'to carry or hold in the hand' + mai 'towards the speaker'). The data for this study were collected during a 13-month period of fieldwork in a traditional village in Western Samoa. Our research focused on the language development of six children over a 10-month period. Audio- and video-recordings were made in naturalistic settings for approximately three hours every five weeks.

This study focuses on three critical factors which appear to influence the Samoan child's spontaneous production of sau ('to come') and aumai ('to bring/give'). These factors are: 1) the inherent semantic complexity of sau versus aumai, 2) the language-specific manner in which these lexical items "divide up" the larger semantic domain, and 3) the cultural constraints which appear to influence the Samoan child's acquisition and use of these forms.

The issue of inherent semantic complexity has been a central concern of child language researchers who have documented the order of acquisition of linguistic elements within a particular semantic domain. In general, it has been reported in the literature that semantically less complex forms are acquired before more complex forms. For example, Clark and Garnica's (1974) study of the motion verbs come, go, bring and take and Gentner's (1975) study of verbs of possession such as give, take, pay and trade have yielded many important insights concerning the order of acquisition of deictic contrasts by English-speaking children. They have focused primarily on semantic factors which appear to influence the comprehension of these elements over developmental time. Come is claimed to be acquired before bring, because bring includes the semantic feature CAUSE and is therefore semantically more complex than come. Similarly, give is acquired before pay because it is semantically less complex. Give includes the feature TRANSFER OF AN OBJECT FROM ONE PERSON TO ANOTHER while pay involves not only this feature, but also the feature OBLIGATION INVOLVING MONEY. These features are presumed to be universal, and thus should contribute to the semantic complexity of lexical items across languages.

The second factor I am concerned with involves the way in which lexical items in a given language group together components within a particular semantic field. With respect to the present study, it is crucial to compare English and Samoan in terms of

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the semantic components of lexical items within the domain of deictic verbs. This is done for a subset of these items in Table 1, by specifying the major semantic features of the English verbs come, bring and give, and the Samoan verbs sau and aumai.

TABLE 1
SEMANTIC FEATURE ANALYSIS OF DEICTIC VERBS IN ENGLISH AND SAMOAN

ENGLISH	SAMOAN
come [speaker is/will be at goal] (Fillmore 1966) [change in location of actor]	sau [speaker is/will be at goal] [change in location of actor]
bring [speaker is/will be at goal] [CAUSE to come] (Lakoff 1972) [change in location of agent and object]	aumai [speaker is/will be at goal] [CAUSE {to come / to have}] [change in location of {agent&object / object}]
give [speaker {is/will be / is not/will not be} at goal] [CAUSE to have] (Lyons 1977) [change in location of object] (Gentner 1975)	

There are several facts to be noted here. First, it appears that both come and sau are semantically less complex than bring, give and aumai. Come and sau do not include the feature CAUSE, and, since they are intransitive verbs, they take only one argument, the actor. Second, come and sau share the same features, namely, both verbs specify that the speaker is at the goal at coding time or will be at the goal at arrival time (Fillmore 1966) and that there is a change in the location of the actor, i.e.

movement toward the speaker (or deictic center). Third, aumai appears to incorporate features of both bring and give, as is indicated by the curly brackets in the features under aumai. Specifically, aumai includes the features of bring: [CAUSE to come] and [change in location of agent and object] as well as features of give: [CAUSE to have] and [change in location of object]. The effect these differences have on the use of these terms is illustrated in Table 2. I have chosen these three situations because of their high frequency of occurrence in the data reported on here.

TABLE 2
COMPARISON OF THE USE OF 'BRING', 'GIVE' AND 'AUMAI'

Sp=speaker, A=addressee, o=object

SITUATION I	SITUATION II	SITUATION III
Sp A o	Sp A o	Sp A o
English:		
Give (me) the o.	Bring (me) the o.	Bring (me) the o.
Samoan:		
(Au)mai le o.	(Au)mai le o.	(Au)mai le o.

The situations differ in terms of the relative distance of the speaker, addressee and object. In situation I, there is little distance between the speaker, addressee and object. The object is either in the addressee's possession or closer to the addressee than to the speaker. In a situation such as this, the English verb give would most likely be used to request the object, while in Samoan, the verb aumai would be used. This is illustrated in example (1):

EXAMPLE 1: Iakopo (2;1) and Iulia (sister, 14 years) are sitting together outside. Iakopo is eating a piece of candy.

Iulia: kopo mai se ka lole
(name) give art poss candy
'Kopo, give me some candy.'

In situation II, the speaker and addressee are relatively close together, while the object is at some distance. In this case, the English verb bring would most likely be used to request the object, while in Samoan, the appropriate verb is again aumai. This is shown in example (2).

EXAMPLE 2: Naomi (3;6), Aimalala (brother, 6 years) and Matau'aina (mother) are sitting inside the house. Matau'aina is weaving a mat.

Matau'aina: malala alu amai si'usi'u laufala lae
(name) go bring ends pandanus loc leaves
'Malala, (go) bring me the ends of those pandanus leaves over there.'

In situation III, the addressee and the object are at some distance from the speaker and may or may not be close to each other. Here, the English verb bring is the most appropriate, while in Samoan the verb aumai is used, as shown in example 3.

EXAMPLE 3: Iti (boy, 12 years) is inside the cookhouse trying to light a fire. Veni (boy, 5 years) is outside clearing away dead leaves.

Iti: kamo'e amai ka mea kafu afi
run bring poss thing light fire
'Hurry up and bring me something to light the fire (i.e. some leaves).'

On the basis of these facts concerning aumai and on the semantic feature analysis presented in Table 1, one might predict that the less complex sau 'to come' would be used productively before the more complex aumai 'to bring/give'. However, the data indicate that aumai is used before sau and that it is generally used more productively than sau, when both have been acquired. This is shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3: PERCENTAGE OF SPONTANEOUS UTTERANCES OF 'SAU' AND 'AUMAI' (IMPERATIVES AND ASSERTIONS)

	Age at onset	Total	I	III	V	VII
IAKOPO	2;1					
sau		8%(10)	0	2%(1)	0	47%(9)
aumai		92%(121)	100%(9)	98%(57)	100%(45)	53%(10)
MATU'U	2;1					
sau		44%(32)	33%(5)	25%(3)	54%(15)	53%(9)
aumai		56%(40)	67%(10)	75%(9)	46%(13)	47%(8)
NAOMI	2;10					
sau		25%(39)	13%(7)	3%(1)	44%(22)	33%(9)
aumai		75%(120)	87%(45)	97%(29)	56%(28)	67%(18)
NIULALA	2;11					
sau		33%(36)	14%(3)	18%(6)	27%(6)	66%(21)
aumai		67%(72)	86%(18)	82%(27)	73%(16)	34%(11)

On the one hand, this result is congruent with studies of infant communication (e.g. Carter 1975) which have documented the early use of "Request Transfer schema", involving requests or demands for objects on the part of the child. On the other hand, this result is not predicted on the basis of a semantic feature analysis, since aumai involves considerably more features than sau.

This contradiction ties into the third area of concern of this study, that of the influence of cultural constraints on language acquisition. The Samoan child's production of sau and aumai is affected by social restrictions on the use of these verbs. These restrictions are motivated by the hierarchical organization of Samoan society in which particular types of behavior are associated with particular social statuses. Samoan beliefs about social status and appropriate behavior generate certain constraints on the use of sau which are different from constraints on the use of aumai. In particular, imperative uses of sau are generally restricted to the speech of higher status persons to those of lower status, or to speech between peers. This restriction does not hold for aumai.

Language-acquiring children are generally surrounded by more higher status persons than lower status persons. Thus, sau is used later and less frequently than aumai precisely because the range of appropriate addressees for sau is more restricted than the range of appropriate addressees for aumai in the child's everyday environment.

The earlier and more frequent use of aumai may be accounted for in another way as well. The Samoan child learns early on that demands for, and exchanges of, goods are crucial to the establishment and maintenance of social relationships. He witnesses continually his older siblings and adults as they negotiate the distribution of goods within and across households. This distribution takes place in a variety of social contexts, ranging from very informal to very formal. A critical feature of this distribution of goods across many types of situations is that every individual is entitled to a share, including the young child. It is quite common at these times for young children to be included in the distribution process and even encouraged to make demands for objects themselves. This is illustrated in example (4).

EXAMPLE 4: Iakopo (2;1), Apolo (mother), Lio (male cousin, 12 years) Iuliana (sister, 4;3) are sitting inside the house. Tautala and Aponiva (adult female members of Iakopo's extended family) are in their own houses nearby.

Apolo: Say: I want to eat a banana! (to Iak)
Lio: I want to eat a banana! (to Iak)
Apolo: Look, he's nodding his head. (to Lio)

ala/	(to Tautala)	Apolo:	Call Tautala to bring you a banana. Call.	(to Iak)
ala/	(to Tautala)			
		Iuliana:	Call.	(to Iak)
ala/X/	(to Tautala)			
		Apolo:	Call her to bring your banana.	(to Iak)
		Apolo:	Call.	(to Iak)
		(interruption)		
		Apolo:	Call Poniva to bring a banana.	(to Iak)
		Iuliana:	Iakopo, call Tautala.	(to Iak)
		Lio:	Call Poniva.	(to Iak)

In this example, Iakopo's mother, older cousin and older sister encourage him to "call out" his demand to the two women nearby.

At other times, the child may be instructed to deliver a share of the food or other goods to an older person who is not present, or to give part of his share to a younger sibling. Thus, the young Samoan child actively participates in these situations both as a "receiver" and as a "giver" of goods.

Cultural expectations concerning the child's demands for objects has been reported in the ethnographic literature on childhood and caregiving. Geertz (1961), for example, made the following observation with respect to sibling caregiving in a Javanese family. It is quite similar to many of my own observations of older sibling-child interaction in Samoan families. Geertz writes: "...the older sibling...is constantly instructed to give in to the wishes of the younger one. If the older one refuses and there is a quarrel, the parents blame him. Even siblings only slightly older than the child are expected to surrender whatever they have to him...". Example (5) illustrates this type of interaction in a Samoan household.

EXAMPLE 5: Iakopo (2;3), Sio (father), Apolo (mother), Iulia (sister, 14 years) and Iuliana (sister, 4;5) are inside the house. Iuliana is playing with a ball which Sio bought in Apia (the capital city). The ball has become flat.

((locks at Iuliana, extends hand))
give me Sio's ball/

		Apolo:	What's the matter? (to Iak)
give me my ball/	(to Iuliana)		
		Apolo:	Hand over your little brother's thing. (to Iuliana)
give me that flat ball/	(to Iuliana)		
		Iulia:	Give the kid his ball. (to Iuliana)

In this example, Iakopo's requests for the ball are supported by Apolo, his mother, and Iulia, an older sister, in their directives to Iuliana.

I would now like to turn to imperative utterances with sau 'to come', which are used to summon the presence of others. As I mentioned earlier, requests for a person to come are generally restricted to the speech of higher status persons (e.g. adults) directed to those of lower status (e.g. the child), or to speech between peers. To assess the children's sensitivity to these social constraints, their spontaneous imperative uses of sau were coded according to whether the addressee was of lower status than the child (e.g. animals, infants, younger siblings), a peer (e.g. a same age or slightly older sibling or other playmate), or higher status (e.g. older sibling caregivers and adults). This is summarized in Table 4 in comparison with spontaneous imperative uses of aumai.

TABLE 4: STATUS OF ADDRESSEE: IMPERATIVES

	Age at onset	sau	aumai
IAKOPO	2;1		
Lower:		0	0
Peer:		100%(3)	38%(42)
Higher:		0	62%(70)
MATU'U	2;1		
Lower:		73%(16)	18%(5)
Peer:		0	29%(8)
Higher:		27%(6)	53%(15)
NAOMI	2;10		
Lower:		62%(18)	1%(1)
Peer:		0	0
Higher:		38%(11)	99%(115)
NIULALA	2;11		
Lower:		8%(2)	15%(9)
Peer:		68%(17)	29%(18)
Higher:		24%(6)	56%(35)

The general trend seems to be that the child's imperative uses of sau are mostly directed to peers or to lower status individuals, while imperative uses of aumai are mostly directed to higher status individuals or to peers. This supports the generalizations made earlier concerning the social constraints on the use of these forms and clarifies why sau appears relatively later and less frequently than aumai in the child's spontaneous utterances.

In addition, this pattern reflects the different functions of

aumai and sau in the young child's interactions with others. Imperative uses of aumai are usually appeals, often used by the child in begging for objects. In these cases, the child is appealing to another individual to attend directly to her needs in some way. Aumai is also used by the child as a way of asserting himself in interactions with peers and older siblings. These social functions of aumai underlie the tendency for these utterances to be addressed to higher status persons or to peers.

Imperative uses of sau have a very different function in the child's interactions with others. These utterances are rarely appeals. They are used by the child to summon the presence of another person, often a younger sibling. In addition, these utterances are often used in games within peer groups. These social functions of sau underlie the tendency for these utterances to be addressed to lower status individuals or to peers.

With respect to the child's imperative uses of sau, it is also important to point out that there are many non-spontaneous instances (which are not included in Table 4) in which the child is instructed to "call out" a request for someone to come on behalf of a high status person. The constraints which normally operate on the child's utterance of sau are suspended at these times. This is illustrated in example (6).

EXAMPLE 6: Kalavini (1;9) and his mother, Sauiluma, are inside the house. Mese (girl, 14 years) and Pasila (boy, 16 years) are outside.

noa/mouse/	(to Elenoa) =E. Ochs	Sauiluma:	Go call Mese to come here. (to Kal)
		Sauiluma:	Go ahead. (to Kal)
noa/mouse/	(to Elenoa)		
		Elenoa:	Yes. (to Kal)
mouse/	(to Elenoa)	Sauiluma:	Call Mese, call Mese to come here. (to Kal)
mouse/noa/mouse/	(to Elenoa)		
		Elenoa:	Mouse. (to Kal)
		Sauiluma:	Vini. (to Kal)
uma/ =Sauiluma	(to Sauiluma)		
		Sauiluma:	What? (to Kal)
mouse/	(to Sauiluma)		
		Sauiluma:	Yes. (to Kal)
		Sauiluma:	Call Pasila, Pasila. First call Pasila. (to Kal)
ka'sila/	(to Pasila)		
		Sauiluma:	Call loudly. (to Kal)
MESE/	(to Mese)		
		Sauiluma:	Come. (to Kal)
come/	(to Mese/Pasila)		
		Sauiluma:	Pasila. (to Kal)
pisila ( ) come/	(to Pasila)		

quickly/ (to Pasila)

hurry up/ (to Pasila)

Sauiluma: Quickly. (to Kal)

Sauiluma: Hurry up. (to Kal)

The two major developmental trends in the data may be summarized as follows: (1) for aumai 'to bring/give': The verb aumai appears to be used before sau and is generally used more frequently than sau. Imperatives with aumai tend to be directed to higher status persons or to peers. These results reflect the fact that the young child is supported and encouraged to make demands for objects, and also instructed to share objects with younger siblings. (2) for sau 'to come': The verb sau is used later and less frequently than the verb aumai. These results reflect the fact that within the household, higher status persons, that is, adult and sibling caregivers, generally issue directives of this type to lower status persons, that is, young children, rather than vice versa. When the child does use an imperative with sau, these utterances tend to be restricted to lower status individuals or to peers.

As a final point, I would like to remark briefly on some problems in trying to compare data on spontaneous production, as in the present study, with experimental data on the comprehension of deictic forms. In attempting to discern patterns or strategies in language acquisition on the basis of spontaneous production data, it is necessary to take into account certain facets of the social environment in which the utterance takes place. In this study, I have been concerned with the influence of cultural beliefs and culture-specific patterns of social organization on the development of language use. Specifically, I have discussed the child's imperative uses of sau and aumai in terms of the extent to which these social acts are supported and encouraged by others. I have also tried to point out the social constraints on the intended addressee of these utterances.

These are a few of the variables which must be taken into account when language production is observed in relatively naturalistic settings, where the situation of utterance does not remain constant. In experimental studies of comprehension, on the other hand, the situation of utterance is held relatively constant, thus making it difficult to compare directly results and conclusions based on these two types of research settings. Both comprehension and production studies have increased our understanding of the language acquisition process. The intent of the present study has been to integrate to some extent the findings from these two methods of research and to demonstrate that social as well as cognitive factors must be considered in accounting for patterns in the acquisition of deictic forms in a particular language.

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